

## **7 FAM 050**

# **CONSULAR INFORMATION PROGRAM, MESSAGES FOR U.S. CITIZENS, AND THE NO DOUBLE STANDARD POLICY**

*(CT:CON-407; 06-29-2012)*  
*(Office of Origin: CA/OCS/L)*

## **7 FAM 051 INTRODUCTION**

### **7 FAM 051.1 Summary**

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

- a. The Consular Information Program, established in late 1992-1993, replaced the earlier "Travel Advisory" program and fully addresses the "No Double Standard" policy (see 7 FAM 052).
- b. Effective the publication date of this section, the Consular Information Program is refined to make terms and definitions more intuitive and understandable, both to the public and within the Department of State. The program now consists of:
  - (1) Country Specific Information;
  - (2) Travel Alerts;
  - (3) Travel Warnings;
  - (4) Worldwide Cautions;
  - (5) Messages for U.S. Citizens, Security Messages for U.S. Citizens, and Emergency Messages for U.S. Citizens (hereafter all will be referred to as "Messages" unless there is a distinction to be made); and
  - (6) Fact Sheets

The changes to this subsection replace the previous category of "Public Announcement" with the term "Travel Alert" and the previous category of "Consular Information Sheet" with "Country Specific Information." The subsection also adds the new category of Security Messages to the Consular Information Program.

- c. Through this information program, the Department informs U.S. citizens/nationals of potential threats to their health or safety abroad.

**All posts and bureaus are to follow the guidance set forth in this section.**

**The Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs has overall responsibility for the Consular Information Program, and must authorize any exceptions to this guidance.**

## **7 FAM 051.2 Authorities**

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

The Consular Information Program is not mandated by statute, but several statutes are relevant to the Department's performance of this function: Section 505 of the Omnibus Diplomatic Security and Antiterrorism Act of 1986 requires the Secretary to notify Congress whenever the Department issues a Travel Warning because of a terrorist threat or other security concern (22 U.S.C. 2656e). Section 321(f) of the Aviation Security Improvement Act of 1990, Public Law 101-604 (49 U.S.C. 44905), prohibits the notification of a civil aviation threat to "only selective potential travelers unless such threat applies only to them." See 7 FAM 052, No Double Standard Policy. See also 22 CFR 71.1, 22 U.S.C. 2671 (b)(2)(A), 22 U.S.C. 4802, 22 U.S.C. 211a, Section 321(f) of the Aviation Security Improvement Act of 1990, 46 U.S.C. Appendix 1804.

## **7 FAM 051.3 Dissemination**

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

Country Specific Information, Messages, Travel Alerts, Travel Warnings, Worldwide Cautions, and Fact Sheets are disseminated widely both in the United States and abroad. Methods of distribution include the following:

- Consular Affairs' Internet web page
- Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) (see 7 FAM 040)
- CA Call Center (1-888-407-4747 (Calling from the United States and Canada) or (202-501-4444) (Calling from other countries)
- Overseas Security and Advisory Council Internet page (OSAC) through the Diplomatic Security Bureau
- Listserve electronic subscriptions (the Consular Information Program documents reach a wide range of travel agents, airline computer reservation systems, and other interested parties, including the House of Representatives Information System (H.I.S.) by this electronic transfer of information)

- The media through the Bureau of Public Affairs. Posts must not use social media as a substitute for dissemination of cleared Messages. The Department encourages U.S. citizens to enroll in STEP as a means to receive the latest safety and security information generated by posts and CA. Once the information is disseminated through STEP, posts may use verbatim excerpts on social media outlets without advance clearance from CA.

## **7 FAM 051.4 Dealing With Your Host Government**

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

- a. Host country officials occasionally express dismay or resentment about the U.S. Government's public dissemination of security-related warnings. The Department has no higher responsibility than the safety and security of U.S. citizens. You may explain that U.S. law requires that we share information with U.S. citizens that will assist them to make prudent decisions about their own safety.
- b. In certain situations, but **only with PRIOR PERMISSION from the Managing Director of CA/Overseas Citizens Services**, you may inform the host government of the imminent release of a Travel Warning. CA/OCS will coordinate Department permission in these cases. **Country Specific Information, Messages, Travel Alerts, and Travel Warnings are never subject to negotiation with or censoring by a foreign government.**

## **7 FAM 052 NO DOUBLE STANDARD POLICY**

### **7 FAM 052.1 Statement of Policy**

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

- a. In administering the travel information program, the Department of State applies a "no double standard" policy to important security threat information, including criminal information.
  - (1) Generally, if the Department shares information with the official U.S. community, it should also make the same or similar information available to the non-official U.S. community if the underlying threat applies to both official and non-official U.S. citizens/nationals.
  - (2) If a post issues information to its employees about potentially dangerous situations, it should evaluate whether the potential

danger could also affect private U.S. citizens/nationals living in or traveling through the affected area.

- (3) If so, the post should notify the Department and request approval of dissemination of the information to the public. In such cases the CA/OCS/ACS Director will coordinate with the OCS Managing Director, OCS/ACS staff, the DS/ITA country officer, the regional desk officer, and others as appropriate to the situation at hand.
- (4) The policy is not intended to prevent the limited distribution of information about threats to specific U.S. citizens/ nationals or U.S. corporations. Post may share important security information on a limited basis when directed toward a specific target or when appropriate to counter a particular threat.

## **7 FAM 052.2 Origin of Policy**

*(CT:CON-109; 07-13-2005)*

In 1990, Congress passed the Aviation Security Improvement Act, which, in Section 109, added to the Federal Aviation Act a requirement that the President "develop guidelines for ensuring notification to the public of threats to civil aviation in appropriate cases." The Act requires that the guidelines identify the officials responsible for deciding whether public notification of a threat is in the best interests of the United States and the traveling public, based on a consideration of among things, the specificity of the threat, the credibility of the information, and the ability to counter the threat. The guidelines were to be distributed to appropriate officials in the Departments of Transportation, State, and Justice, as well as to air carriers. The law prohibits selective notification of a threat to civil aviation to only selective potential travelers unless the threat applies only to them. These and other related provisions are now codified in 49 U.S.C. 44905. After enactment of these provisions, the Department decided to follow similar policies in non-civil aviation contexts.

## **7 FAM 053 PROCEDURES FOR ISSUANCE OF COUNTRY SPECIFIC INFORMATION, TRAVEL WARNINGS, AND TRAVEL ALERTS**

### **7 FAM 053.1 General**

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

- a. The Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs is responsible for supervising and managing the travel information program. The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Overseas Citizens Services has primary day-to-day supervisory responsibility for the program. The Department requires all posts, regional bureaus, and appropriate functional bureaus to cooperate fully in this activity.
- b. Within the Bureau of Consular Affairs, the Managing Director in the Directorate of Overseas Citizens Services (CA/OCS) is responsible for the day-to-day management and issuance of travel information, including coordinating the preparation of all Country Specific Information, Travel Alerts, Travel Warnings, Worldwide Cautions, Messages, and Fact Sheets before their release. (See 1 FAM 255 c.) The Managing Director may delegate operational responsibility to the ACS Office Director and geographic division chiefs in the Office of American Citizens Services.
- c. CA/OCS reviews the need for a Travel Warning when information comes to its attention indicating a situation that may warrant deferral of travel to a particular country or major parts of it due to a dangerous situation that is protracted or unstable. Requests for issuance of a Travel Warning may also originate from a post or from elsewhere within the Department.
- d. In addition, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS), the Bureau of Counterterrorism (CT), and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) inform the Director of CA/OCS of conditions warranting inclusion in the Country Specific Information or that may necessitate a Travel Warning, Travel Alert, or Message. Other U.S. Government agencies may also contribute to this process. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Environmental Protection Agency have contributed greatly to Consular Information Program documents related to certain health hazards.
- e. Clearances: CA/OCS/ACS is responsible for operational coordination and securing clearance for all Consular Information Documents. Posts must coordinate with their CA/OCS/ACS country officer.
  - (1) For Country Specific Information, CA/OCS/ACS clears with the relevant regional bureau and the Bureau of Public Affairs (PA). The CA/OCS/ACS Director, or ACS geographic Division Chiefs when delegated by the ACS Director, may approve routine Country Specific Information for CA.
  - (2) For Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, CA/OCS/ACS clears with a Deputy Assistant Secretary or higher in the affected regional bureau. CA/OCS also clears these documents with the Office of Public Affairs (PA), the Office of the Under Secretary for Political Affairs (P), the Office of the Under Secretary for Management (M),

and the Office of the Deputy Secretary (D).

- (3) For Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts related to security threats, CA/OCS clears with Diplomatic Security (DS) and Counterterrorism (CT). If health issues are involved, the Office of Medical Services (M/Med) clears. For aviation issues, the Economic and Business Affairs Bureau (EB/TRA) clears.
  - (4) For Emergency Messages for U.S. Citizens and Security Messages for U.S. Citizens, CA/OCS/ACS clears with the affected regional bureau and with DS, and, circumstances depending, may also clear with CT, M/MED or EB/TRA. However, Messages for U.S. Citizens typically contain routine information not related to safety or security, and do not require prior Department clearance.
- f. Disagreements Among Bureaus: Disagreements among bureaus over Country Specific Information, Travel Warnings, or Travel Alerts are generally resolved by either the Under Secretary for Political Affairs (P) or the Under Secretary for Management (M).

**Note FYI:** In June 2003, an Accountability Review Board provided for a review of Consular Information Program documents "to ensure that there are no political statements. The documents will also reiterate personal security safeguards and the need to be vigilant. **The Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs will be authorized to determine the final wording of the Consular Information Program documents.**"

## 7 FAM 053.2 Security Threats

### 7 FAM 053.2-1 Department's Role

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

- a. The security threat information contained in Travel Alerts, Travel Warnings, Worldwide Cautions, and Messages is derived from threat information gathered from multiple sources, including our posts, the U.S. intelligence community, open sources, and our allies.
- b. When security threat information is received, the relevant bureaus in the Department and other U.S. Government agencies attempt to evaluate whether a security threat is credible, specific (aimed at a particular individual or group and/or identifying a time and place), and non-counterable (cannot be avoided by taking appropriate measures).
- c. If a threat evaluated as credible, specific, and non-counterable is targeted to a specific group or individual, and is unlikely to impact others, then the

Department, either directly or through post, may notify only that group or individual of the threat. For example, if easily identifiable members of the local U.S. community, such as employees of a particular company, are targeted, there would normally be no need to disseminate the threat information beyond the targeted group.

- d. If a threat evaluated as credible, specific, and non-counterable is aimed at a broad group (e.g., U.S. citizens/nationals and/or U.S. interests generally), the Department will authorize the relevant post(s) to issue a Message, and may also issue or update a Travel Alert, Travel Warning, or Worldwide Caution.

## **7 FAM 053.2-2 Post's Role**

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

- a. To ensure that the Department and posts avoid providing contradictory information on security threats to U.S. citizens/nationals, it is essential that post coordinate with the Department on dissemination of any information about potential threats to the safety and travel of U.S. citizens/nationals. At post, it is essential for the consular section and the Regional Security Officer to put in place standard operating procedures that ensure close coordination on disseminating information to the official and/or private U.S. citizen communities.
- b. If you learn of a security threat, report it to the Department following the established procedures at your post. At this stage, you should not disseminate information about the threat beyond those with a "need to know" (i.e., persons who could develop additional information, help to counter the threat, or help assess appropriate dissemination) to avoid violating the "no double standard" policy (see 7 FAM 052). In the event the information is mistakenly disseminated to U.S. Government employees and/or others without a need to know, post should notify the Department immediately, with the post's senior consular officer responsible for ensuring that CA/OCS/ACS is among those notified.
- c. If post believes that it should warn post personnel and/or issue a Security or Emergency Message, see 7 FAM 058 for what constitutes an Emergency Message for U.S. Citizens or Security Message for U.S. Citizens. When warning the local U.S. citizen/national community about a security threat, you should cable or email the basis for your concern, along with the proposed text of the message, to the Department via post's CA/OCS/ACS country officer. Your CA/OCS/ACS country officer is responsible for coordinating and securing Department clearance, and responding to post promptly. If the Emergency or Security Message pertains to a threat so immediate that it cannot wait until Washington

opening-of-business, clear your message with the CA/OCS duty officer, providing the proposed Message text. Post may contact the duty officer by calling the Department of State Operations Center. The CA/OCS/ACS country officer or CA/OCS duty officer will obtain clearances from CA, the regional bureau, Diplomatic Security, and any other relevant bureaus.

- d. Post may disseminate information about a threat without prior Department approval **ONLY** if immediate notice is critical to the security of U.S. citizens/nationals **and** there is no time to seek the Department's approval. These situations are exceedingly rare. In such a case, post must inform the CA/OCS Duty Officer, and send the text of the Emergency or Security Message to the Department via cable or archive/record email as soon as possible after its issuance, explaining the exigent circumstances and specifying how it disseminated the Message. The Department will then decide whether it also needs to issue or update a Travel Alert or Travel Warning.
- e. Remember that if post concludes it should warn its personnel or any U.S. Government employees, whether permanently stationed or on temporary duty abroad, about a security threat, the request for Department approval to warn post personnel should also include a request to share that same information with the non-official U.S. community under the "no double standard" policy (see 7 FAM 052). The policy applies whether the information is shared with U.S. Government employees in town meetings, in post newsletters, by email, on the telephone, or by any other means. The threat or warning information might include information about locations within the host country including hotels, restaurants, entertainment spots, places of worship, tourist sites, etc. Unless the threat is specific to a particular institution for reasons peculiar to that institution, you should not list names of specific locations, including names of hotels or restaurants, for which threat or warning information is available. You should also refrain from developing lists of "approved" hotels. In providing such lists to the community, you may actually increase the risk that perpetrators could change the target, thus increasing the risk to U.S. citizens/nationals who may be relying on such lists.
- f. The Secretary's Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) was created to foster the exchange of unclassified security related information between the U.S. Government and the U.S. private sector operating abroad. OSAC provides the U.S. private sector with timely information on which to base informed decisions on how best to protect their assets. OSAC is responsible for ensuring that information about specific, credible, non-counterable threats that they learn about from posts is provided to corporate security headquarters in the United States on a need to know basis only. If a post shares information on a specific, credible, and non-



counterable threat with the OSAC constituency in a country, then *post* must also communicate that information to the rest of the non-official U.S. community under the "No Double Standard" policy. Notifying OSAC does not absolve consular officers of the responsibility to keep members of the private U.S. community informed (see 1 FAM 262 a(6)).

- g. Post should contact the Department as soon as possible when it knows in advance that a situation may warrant a Security or Emergency Message for U.S. Citizens. For example, if post believes there is a potential for violence affiliated with public demonstrations planned around political rallies or marking an anniversary of a political or other major event, post should send in the request as early as possible to allow the Department to respond promptly and appropriately (e.g., authorize the issuance of a Security or Emergency Message for U.S. Citizens and determine whether the information needs to issue or update a Travel Alert or Travel Warning). It is helpful not to wait to request Department approval until the day before the anniversary of an event known well in advance to have potential for provoking demonstrations and violence.
- h. Post management should ensure that U.S. Government agencies under Chief of Mission authority understand fully the U.S. Government's "No Double Standard" policy and Department's guidance on the policy. Chiefs of Mission should advise these U.S. Government agencies that if they share information on a specific, credible, non-counterable threat with their employees beyond those with a legitimate "need to know," post must share that same information with the non-official U.S. community. Post would initially accomplish the sharing of information with the local non-official U.S. community by issuing a Security or Emergency Message for U.S. Citizens, cleared by the Department as outlined above. If appropriate, you would then coordinate with the Department on the issuance of a Travel Warning or Travel Alert or the revision of the relevant Country Specific Information.

## **7 FAM 054 COUNTRY SPECIFIC INFORMATION**

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

- a. **Summary:** The Department, through the Bureau of Consular Affairs, issues Country Specific Information for every country in the world. These provide basic information to enable a traveler to make an informed decision concerning travel to a particular country. For instance, Country Specific Information describes entry and exit requirements, road safety, crime information, areas of instability, aviation safety oversight and customs information, among other things, and it contains the address and

telephone number of the U.S. embassy and consulate. CA works with posts to update Country Specific Information at least bi-annually. We use these as a vital resource that contains up-to-date information for those traveling or living abroad. Besides changes in circumstances unique to your consular district, there are periodic changes to information that pertains to all posts.

- b. Country Specific Information Template: CA/OCS/ACS writes the Country Specific Information using a template, and its country officers provide posts with the current version of the model document when the Country Specific Information is due for revision.
- c. Unless it includes a Travel Warning (see section 7 FAM 056), Country Specific Information is intended to present general facts to the public, not to provide advice. It is the reader's responsibility to decide about the advisability of travel.

## **7 FAM 055 TRAVEL ALERTS**

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

- a. The Department issues Travel Alerts to disseminate information about short-term conditions, generally within a particular country, that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens/nationals. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups or anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations/violence, and high profile events such as an international conference or regional sports event are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert.
- b. Travel Alerts need not be restricted to a single country. The Department may decide to issue a regional Travel Alert for short-term conditions, such as those described above, which affect several countries. While a Travel Alert should not substitute for a Travel Warning when conditions call for the latter, Travel Alerts can recommend that U.S. citizens reconsider/defer travel to a country or region for the duration of the short term conditions mentioned.
- c. The opening paragraph of a Travel Alert should describe, as explicitly as possible, the developments that prompted its issuance. When a new Travel Alert supersedes an existing one, the first paragraph will also include an evaluation of whether the situation in the country is improving, deteriorating, or unchanged.
- d. Travel Alerts are issued for a specific period, usually 90 days or less, and expire automatically at the end of the prescribed period unless extended by the Department. If conditions warrant, the Department may cancel a

Travel Alert before the end of the prescribed period via ALDAC and press release.

## **7 FAM 056 TRAVEL WARNINGS**

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

- a. The Department issues Travel Warnings to recommend that U.S. citizens defer or reconsider travel to a country due to a protracted situation that is dangerous or unstable. The Department also issues a Travel Warning when the U.S. Government's ability to assist U.S. citizens is constrained due to a drawdown or closure at an embassy or consulate, even if the underlying condition is thought to be of limited duration. The Department must issue a Travel Warning whenever a post goes to authorized or ordered departure status.
- b. The opening paragraph of a Travel Warning should describe, as explicitly as possible, the developments in the country that prompted the issuance of the warning.
- c. The first paragraph also states that U.S. citizens should defer or reconsider travel to a country due to the situation and/or because the U.S. Government's ability to assist them is constrained by an embassy drawdown or closure.
- d. When a new Travel Warning supersedes an existing one, the first paragraph will also include an evaluation of whether the situation in the country is improving, deteriorating, or unchanged.
- e. Travel Warnings are reviewed continually and are updated at least every six months to ensure that the most current safety and security information is shared with the U.S. citizen public. Travel Warnings are not issued for a specific period and do not expire automatically. When conditions warrant, the Department will cancel a Travel Warning, announcing the cancellation, via an all diplomatic and consular posts (ALDAC) cable and a press release.

## **7 FAM 057 WORLDWIDE CAUTION**

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

- a. The Worldwide Caution (WWC) reminds U.S. citizens to maintain a high level of vigilance and to bolster their personal security while overseas. It also informs U.S. citizens of ongoing security concerns, including the continual threat of terrorist actions and violence against U.S. citizens and U.S. citizen interests overseas. The Worldwide Caution pays particular

attention to regions of concern where there is a continued threat of terrorism.

- b. CA/OCS reviews the Worldwide Caution continually and updates it at least every six months to ensure the most current general and regional safety and security information is shared with the U.S. citizen public.

## **7 FAM 058 MESSAGES, SECURITY MESSAGES, AND EMERGENCY MESSAGES FOR U.S. CITIZENS**

### **7 FAM 058.1 SUMMARY**

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

- a. Along with Country Specific Information, Travel Alerts, and Travel Warnings, Messages for U.S. Citizens, Security Messages for U.S. Citizens, and Emergency Messages for U.S. Citizens (hereafter referred to as Messages unless there is a distinction to be made) are an important component of the Department's Consular Information Program. This section provides guidance on writing, clearing, and the appropriate use of Messages. Refer to 7 FAM 070 on warden systems, which can be valuable communications platforms for these Messages.
- b. There are three kinds of official local communications with our registered U.S. citizens:
  - (1) You must use a "Message for U.S. Citizens" to disseminate information about routine topics such as voter registration, income tax season, new passport procedures, and other administrative/non-security issues of interest to the local U.S. citizen community.
  - (2) You should use a "Security Message for U.S. Citizens" to communicate information about personal security threats of a general or systemic nature, or events/threats where local law-enforcement has taken measures to address or provide enhanced security to the general public. Such threats may include crime trends, demonstrations, peaceful actions intended to disrupt normal activity (i.e., strikes, sit-ins, marches), or localized events not likely to affect large numbers of U.S. citizens.
  - (3) You should use an "Emergency Message for U.S. Citizens" to inform U.S. citizens about imminent events or threats that can affect their personal security and that may require immediate action by U.S.

- citizens on their own behalf, or by others, to ensure their safety. Emergency Messages may also be appropriate for threats to large numbers of U.S. citizens, circumstances where new developments to an existing security threat heighten the risks to U.S. citizens, or situations that put the life or safety of U.S. citizens in peril. This includes potentially violent demonstrations, civil disturbances, natural disasters, terrorist attacks, extraordinary measures by local authorities such as martial law, and other non-publicized breaking events. When the Department revises the Worldwide Caution, or issues a Travel Alert or Travel Warning for your country or region, you should disseminate it with an Emergency Message unless otherwise directed.
- c. Posts have discretion in determining whether circumstances call for a Security Message or Emergency Message. However, to help promote consistency, CA/OCS makes the final determination when there are differences of opinion between posts and other offices outside the Bureau of Consular Affairs as to which type of message is most appropriate.
  - d. Formatting Messages: You must provide a simple context for your message and clearly state that the U.S. Embassy or Consulate is sending it. Messages may be posted or cited by other sources so it is important that they can stand alone without a separate cover note.

Here are some examples:

Emergency Message for U.S. Citizens– Ebola Outbreak

U.S. Embassy Dakar, Senegal

June 1, 2011

(See CA Intranet Consular Information Program Health Issues)

Security Message for U.S. Citizens– Upcoming Protests in Madrid

U.S. Embassy Madrid, Spain

June 1, 2011

Message for U.S. Citizens – Town Hall Meeting

U.S. Embassy Dakar, Senegal

June 1, 2011

## 7 FAM 058.2 Writing a Security or Emergency Message for U.S. Citizens

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

- a. The Department's "No Double Standard" policy, provided in 7 FAM 052, is an integral part of our approach to determine whether to send a Message. The double standard we guard against is in sharing threat-related information with the official U.S. community -- beyond those whose job involves investigating and evaluating threats -- but not disseminating it to the U.S. citizen general public when that information does or could apply to them as well. If information is mistakenly disseminated to the official U.S. community -- either in writing or by word-of-mouth -- who do not have a need to know, post should inform CA/OCS as soon as possible. The Department will work with post to develop language that is appropriate to release to the public.
- b. The nature of a potential threat, time factors, front office demands, and other pressures are often present around consular officers tasked with drafting Messages. The following guidance should help in the drafting process regardless of circumstances:
  - (1) **Keep It Short and To the Point:** Many warden networks (see 7 FAM 070) involve phone trees and messages that are passed orally. Consular officers should remind their wardens not to paraphrase Messages, but to deliver them verbatim. It is much easier for everyone to adhere to this policy if messages are short. Your message should be straightforward and as specific as possible.
  - (2) When you provide advice on security precautions, also try to provide guidance on how to approach a specific incident. For example, if you are cautioning the U.S. citizen community to avoid a particular neighborhood in the capital because demonstrations are likely, you should remind U.S. citizens that even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn into confrontational or potentially violent situations, possibly escalate into violence, and are to be avoided.
  - (3) **Never use classified language.** Although this should be apparent, there have been a number of incidents where classified information was used in notices to the official community and then planned for release to the general public. Unless the Department can obtain an unclassified version of the information, it cannot be disseminated beyond those with a need to know for investigative or assessment purposes. Releasing it to any others in the mission would create a "No Double Standard" situation.

- (4) **Use previously cleared language whenever possible.** You do not need to reinvent Messages every time. Whenever appropriate to your situation, CA encourages you to use previously cleared language from previous Messages, Country Specific Information, Travel Alerts, Travel Warnings, or Worldwide Cautions. You must still secure Department clearance for this new Message.
- (5) Always include your post's phone number, address, and website at the end of your message. (NOTE: If the Department establishes a Consular Task Force related to a crisis, Consular Affairs may provide alternative/additional contact information for use in the Message.)
- (6) Avoid using the word "unconfirmed;" for example, "According to unconfirmed reports..." If reports are unconfirmed, you should not disseminate them.
- (7) Avoid terms such as "credible and specific" when referring to threats. While the Department uses these terms in evaluating threat information, you should not use them in Messages.

## **7 FAM 058.3 Procedures for Issuing an Emergency or Security Message**

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

- a. To ensure that the U.S. Government's "No Double Standard" policy (see 7 FAM 052) is not violated and that the traveling public (i.e., those not yet in your country) know of impending threats, **you should not** issue an Emergency Message or a Security Message pertaining to safety or security of private U.S. citizens without first clearing the language with the Department. The Department will grant clearance quickly once a consular officer at post contacts an OCS/ACS country officer to initiate the process. Except in extraordinarily urgent circumstances (see 7 FAM 053.2-2.), the Department must clear all Emergency Messages and Security Messages in advance of dissemination.
- b. If post intends to disseminate a short message via SMS (text) or social media that relates to the new Message, post should submit the Message and the shorter social media/SMS text to CA/OCS/ACS at the same time for clearance.
- c. Messages for U.S. Citizens typically contain routine information not related to safety or security, and do not need to be approved by the Department.
- d. Whenever you issue any Emergency Message, Security Message, or Message, whether or not approved in advance by the Department, always email a copy of the message to your CA/OCS/ACS country officer.

- e. As soon as possible following clearance, place the cleared Message on your mission's Web site for the duration of its validity. You may choose to remove it or move it to your post's archive page when it is no longer current. Some posts keep a list of all previous Emergency Messages, Security Messages, and Messages posted for the year to help give U.S. citizens additional context for the safety/security situation in the consular district. Messages older than a year can be archived.

## **7 FAM 058.4 Emergency Preparedness - Temporary Closure**

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

- a. If a security situation requires your post to close to the public, you must send a Message to inform the public. CA/OCS will help determine whether the Message should be sent as an Emergency Message or as a Security Message. As in the case of other Messages related to security threats, the Department should clear such a message in all but extraordinarily urgent circumstances. After hours, on weekends, or on holidays, the CA/OCS Duty Officer, accessible through the Department's Operations Center, will coordinate obtaining the clearances from the duty officers of the required bureaus, who will in turn obtain clearances from the bureau principals as necessary. In extremely time-sensitive cases, the Operations Center can conference in all the interested bureaus after hours. (See 7 FAM 053.2-2.) The Emergency Message or Security Message should include the following details:
  - (1) The circumstances that caused the closure to the public, worded in a way that is publicly releasable (unclassified plain language);
  - (2) The effective date of post closing to the public, and the likely re-opening date, if known. Also note in this Message which days the embassy would have been routinely closed (i.e., local holiday, U.S. Government holiday, normal weekend closures); e.g., "effective date of closure to the public is May 5, with expected re-opening date of May 7. These dates include a routine closure on May 6 to observe a local holiday";
  - (3) Which sections are closed to the public (e.g., passport and visa services, library, and Foreign Commercial Service (FCS) office closed);
  - (4) Provisions made for emergency services to U.S. citizens, if applicable; and
  - (5) Phone number/contact information for use by U.S. citizens who seek emergency citizen services.



- b. Since Messages are a primary method for you to maintain contact with the U.S. citizen/national community in country, post's emergency action plan should incorporate strategies to keep this channel of communication open when post is under a state of emergency or during events such as a temporary closure to the public.
- c. In this regard, the consular section should have an established method of sending Messages from a location other than post in the event that post is closed, or the security situation is such that the official U.S. citizen community must remain indoors or away from post's building(s). Post may consider putting the warden address list on an approved portable storage device to allow post to send Messages from a residence or an alternate command center. CA suggests that the consular section enlist the Information Program Officer's (IPO) assistance, if necessary, and remember to use the **Blind Courtesy Copy (bcc) line** when sending Messages via email to protect the privacy of individuals and prevent misuse of the warden address list.

## 7 FAM 058.5 Message Fatigue

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

Sending out multiple Emergency Messages, Security Messages or Messages about an ongoing non-crisis event can dull the impact of those messages with the audience and lead to Message fatigue. Message fatigue is a constant concern, particularly for a post dealing with significant political violence or instability or frequently occurring severe natural occurrences (e.g., cyclonic storms, minor volcanic or seismic activity). Reduce the frequency of your Messages by including text in your Country Specific Information noting that the activity occurs frequently and/or multiple disruptive events occur in a particular area. For example, demonstrations related to elections or the anniversary of an important event in the country may recur periodically or even annually. Including this type of information in the Country Specific Information will ensure that the public has already had the opportunity to learn about a potentially dangerous place or time to travel and can take preventive action. Security Messages and Emergency Messages are most effective when they cite specific reasons for the message. U.S. citizens should know why they are receiving a Message. It is important for the integrity of the Consular Information Program that posts provide accurate and timely information to U.S. citizens. CA/OCS will normally not approve Security and Emergency Messages that refer to an existing Worldwide Caution without further supporting justification to the U.S. citizen public. Close communication between CA/OCS/ACS country officers, post consular section ACS officers, and Regional Security Officers (RSOs) helps ensure that RSOs are providing official U.S. citizens/nationals

with the same information that CA/OCS/ACS and consular sections are offering to the non-official community, in keeping with the No Double Standard policy. (See 7 FAM 052.)

## **7 FAM 058.6 Use Department Language -Don't Paraphrase**

*(CT:CON-407; 06-29-2012)*

- a. To keep messages brief and accurate, you may wish to remind the local U.S. community of existing and current security or safety information. In such instances, use language from current Travel Alerts, Messages, Travel Warnings, and Country Specific Information. This language is already cleared with all relevant Department bureaus and, when appropriate, other Washington organizations. The language reflects the various concerns of the clearing offices. Any change to the language may alter a meaning that a clearing office thought was important. (Note: If the referenced language was cleared more than six months ago, post should contact the CA/OCS/ACS country officer for further direction.)
- b. If post intends to disseminate a short message via SMS (text) or social media that relates to a new or existing Message, Travel Alert, or Travel Warning, post should submit the text of the SMS/social media message to **CA/OCS/ACS** for clearance. (See 7 FAM 058.3 above.)

## **7 FAM 059 FACT SHEETS**

*(CT:CON-399; 02-13-2012)*

The Bureau of Consular Affairs also issues Fact Sheets to address specific issues related to the health and safety of U.S. citizens abroad.

### **Fact Sheet Examples:**

Anthrax Vaccine Fact Sheet

Avian Flu Fact Sheet

SARS Fact Sheet

Foot and Mouth Disease Fact Sheet

Chemical Biological Agents Fact Sheet

Behavior Modification Facilities Fact Sheet

Responding to Radiological and Nuclear Incidents Fact Sheet